FROM THE LEAD WRITER OF THE DRAGON AGE GAMES

DRAGON AGE

DARK HORSE COMICS
DRAGON AGE
2 OF 3

UNTIL WE SLEEP

DAVID GAIDER | ALEXANDER FREED | CHAD HARDIN

DRAGON AGE™

UNTIL WE SLEEP

Part 2 of 3

Three brave souls—King Alistair of Ferelden, the dwarven rogue and storyteller Varric Tethras, and the notorious pirate known as Isabela—have embarked upon a mission to rescue Alistair's father, King Maric, from the blood mage Aurelian Titus.

While Alistair and Isabela staged a frontal assault on Titus's fortress, Varric slipped behind enemy lines and located the fortress prison. With the help of the captive Maevaris Tilani—widow to Varric's cousin and sorcerous enemy to Titus—Varric found King Maric locked in a strange machine.

Uncertain of the machine's nature but shaken by its obvious dark magic, Varric attempted to destroy it—and in the explosion that followed, everything went white . . .

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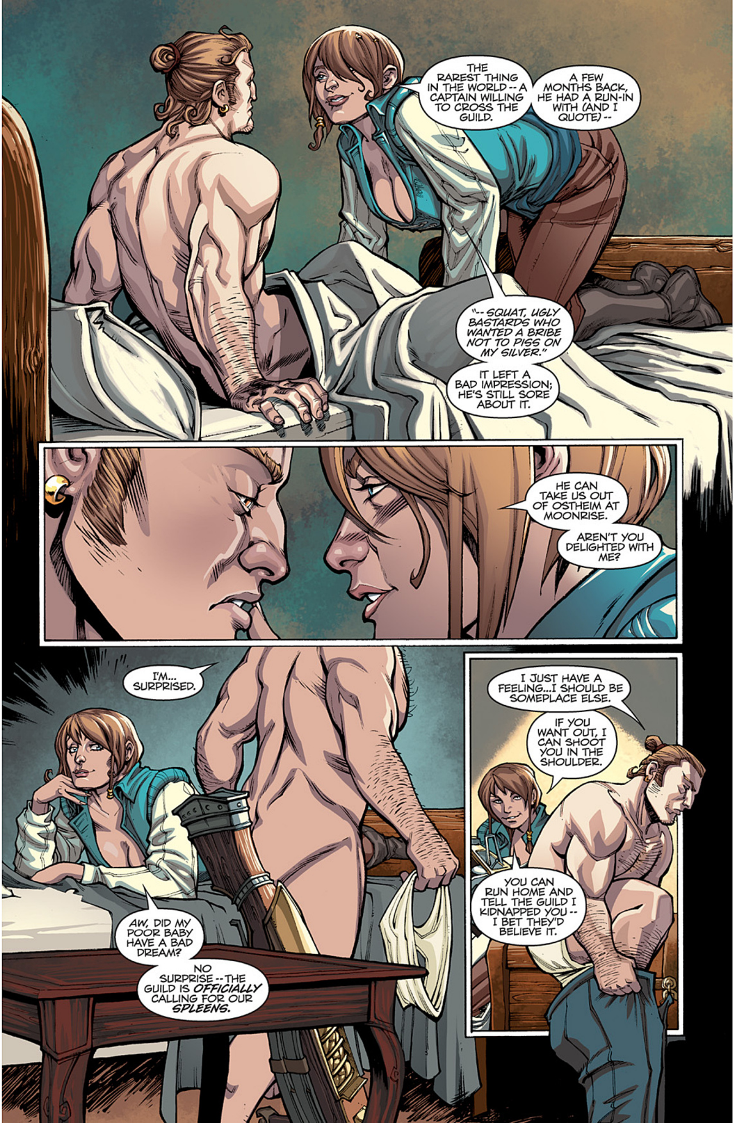
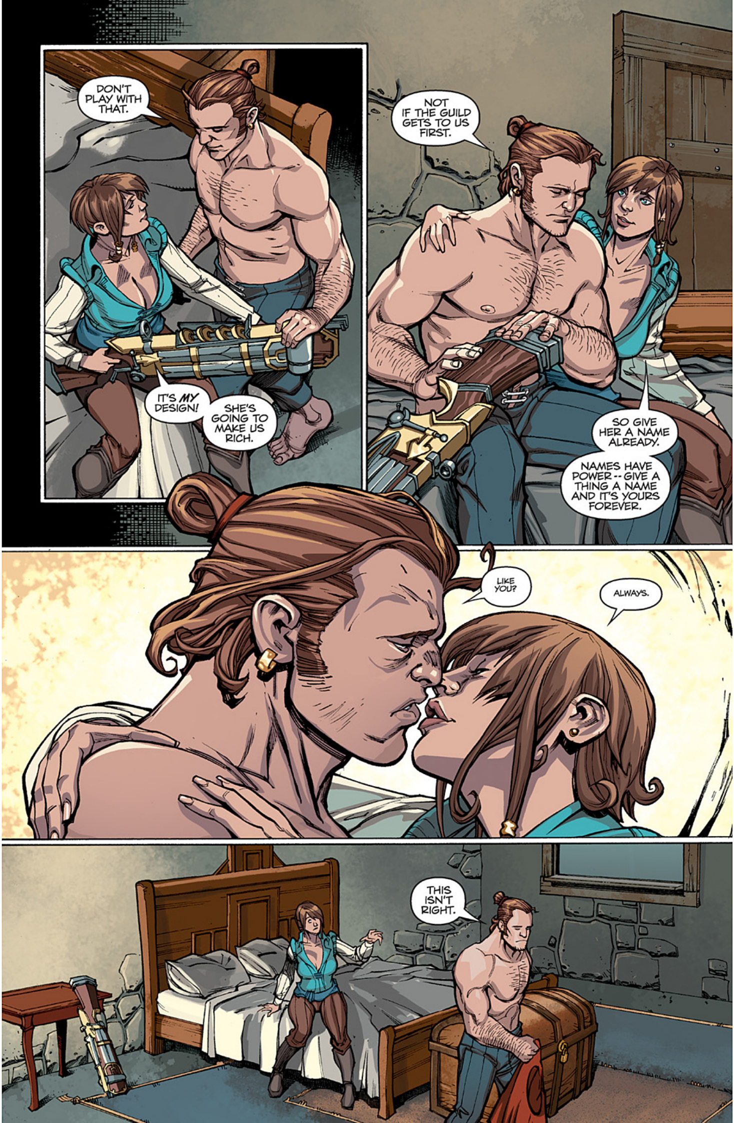
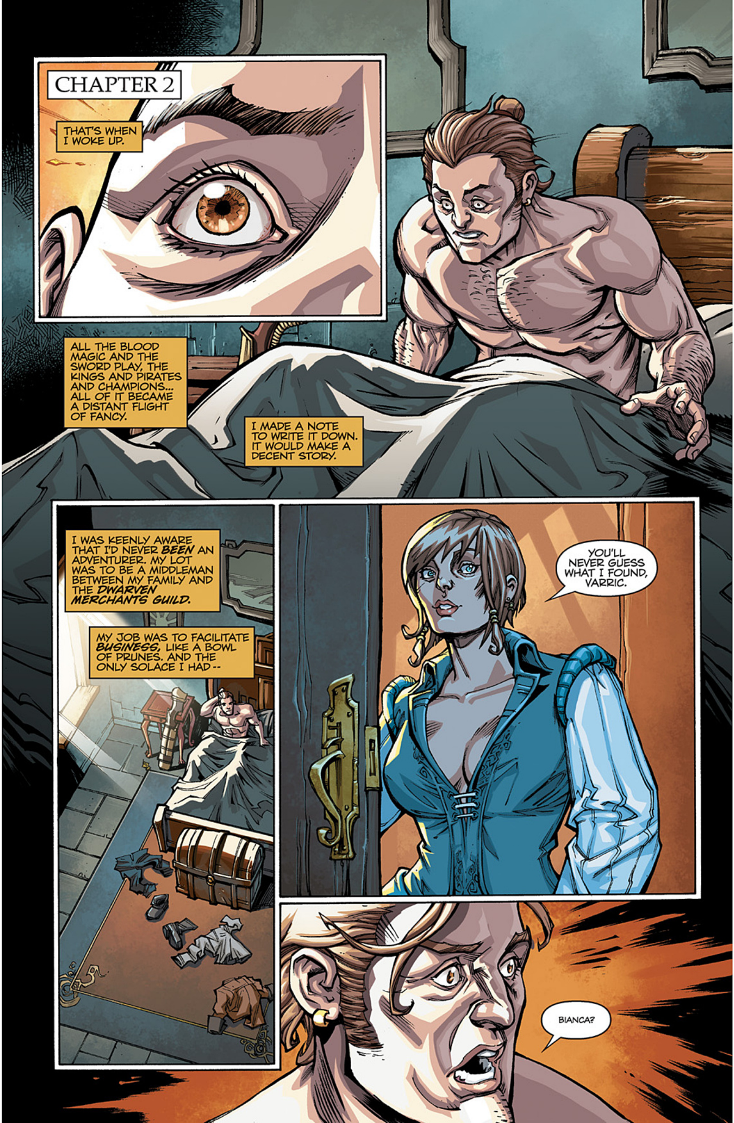
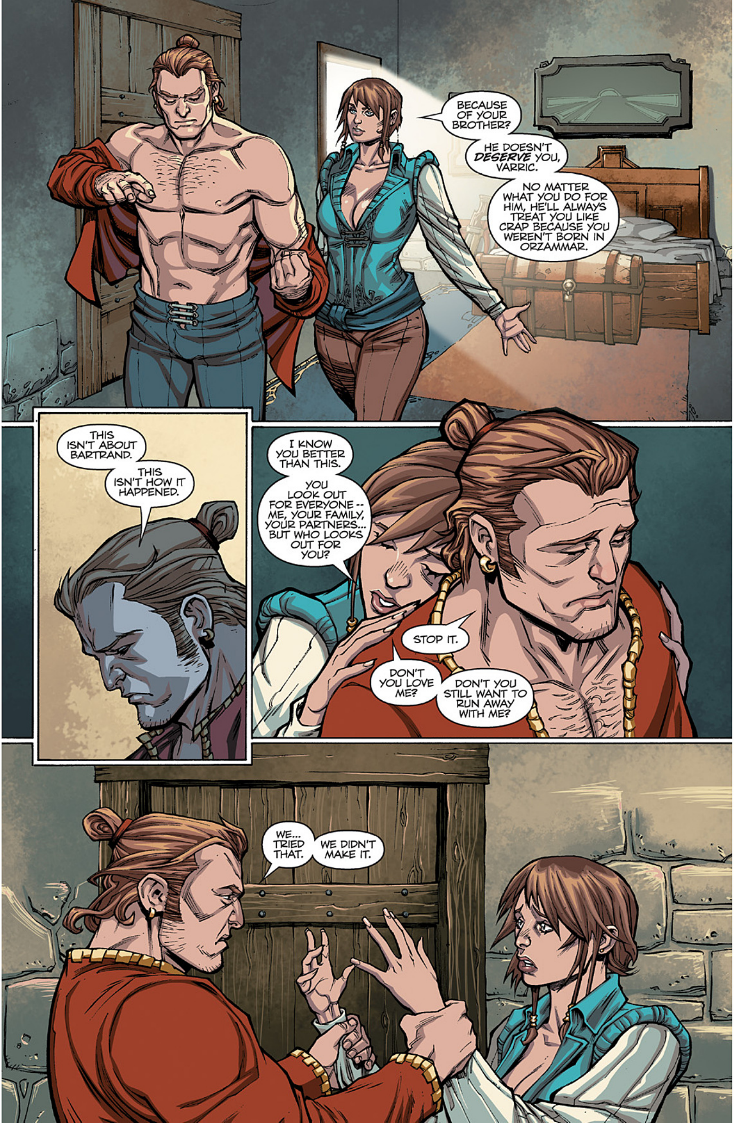
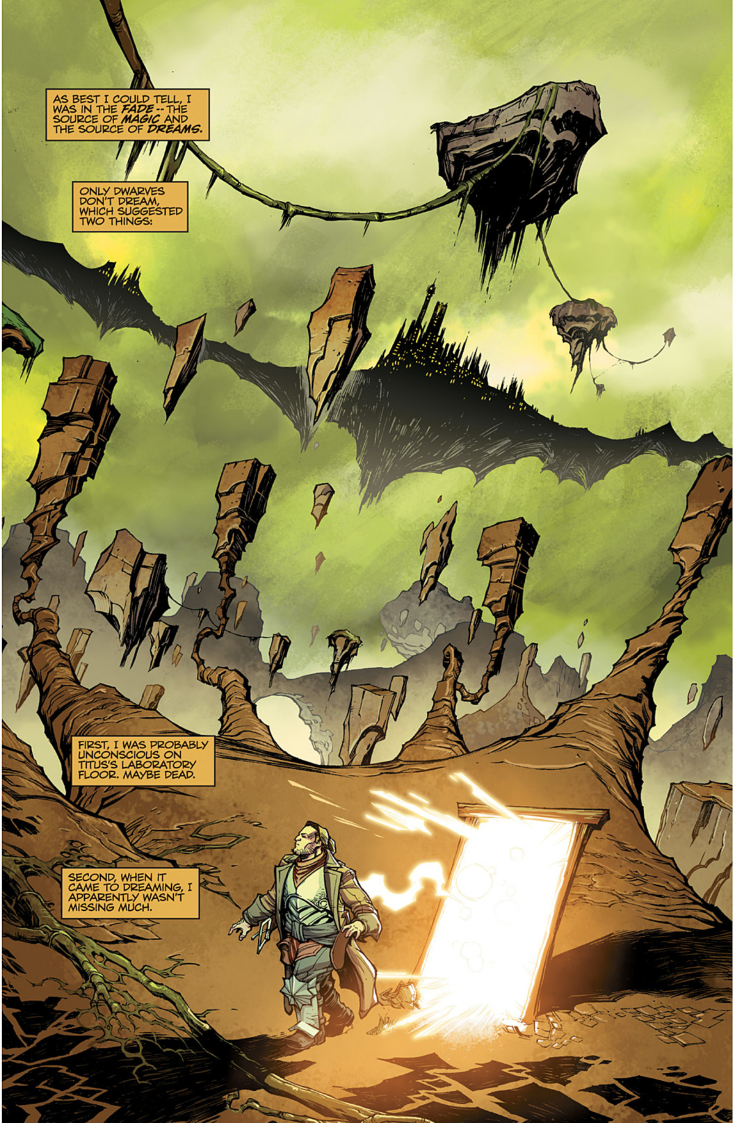
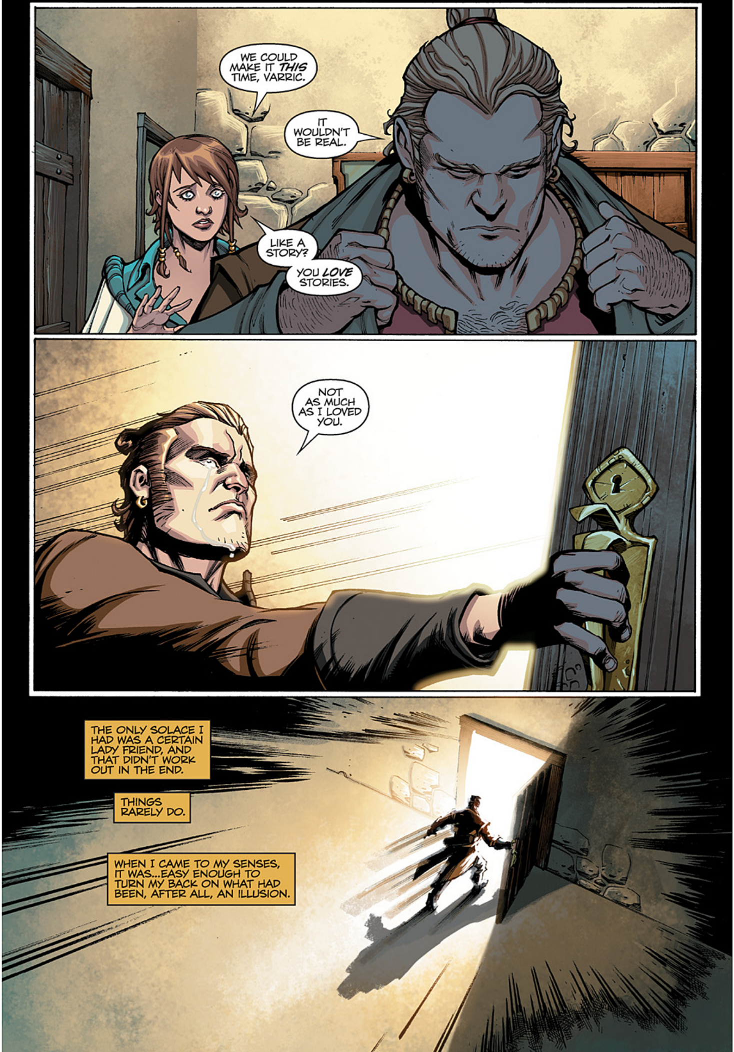

THE RAREST THING IN THE WORLD -- A CAPTAIN WILLING TO CROSS THE GUILD.
A FEW MONTHS BACK, HE HAD A RUN-IN WITH (AND I QUOTE) --
"-- *SQUAT, UGLY BASTARDS WHO WANTED A BRIBE NOT TO PISS ON MY SILVER.*"
IT LEFT A BAD IMPRESSION; HE'S STILL SORE ABOUT IT.
HE CAN TAKE US OUT OF OSTHEIM AT MOONRISE.
AREN'T YOU DELIGHTED WITH ME?
I'M... SURPRISED.
AW, DID MY POOR BABY HAVE A BAD DREAM?
NO SURPRISE -- THE GUILD IS *OFFICIALLY* CALLING FOR OUR *SPLEENS.*
I JUST HAVE A FEELING...I SHOULD BE SOMEPLACE ELSE.
IF YOU WANT OUT, I CAN SHOOT YOU IN THE SHOULDER.
YOU CAN RUN HOME AND TELL THE GUILD I KIDNAPPED YOU -- I BET THEY'D BELIEVE IT.

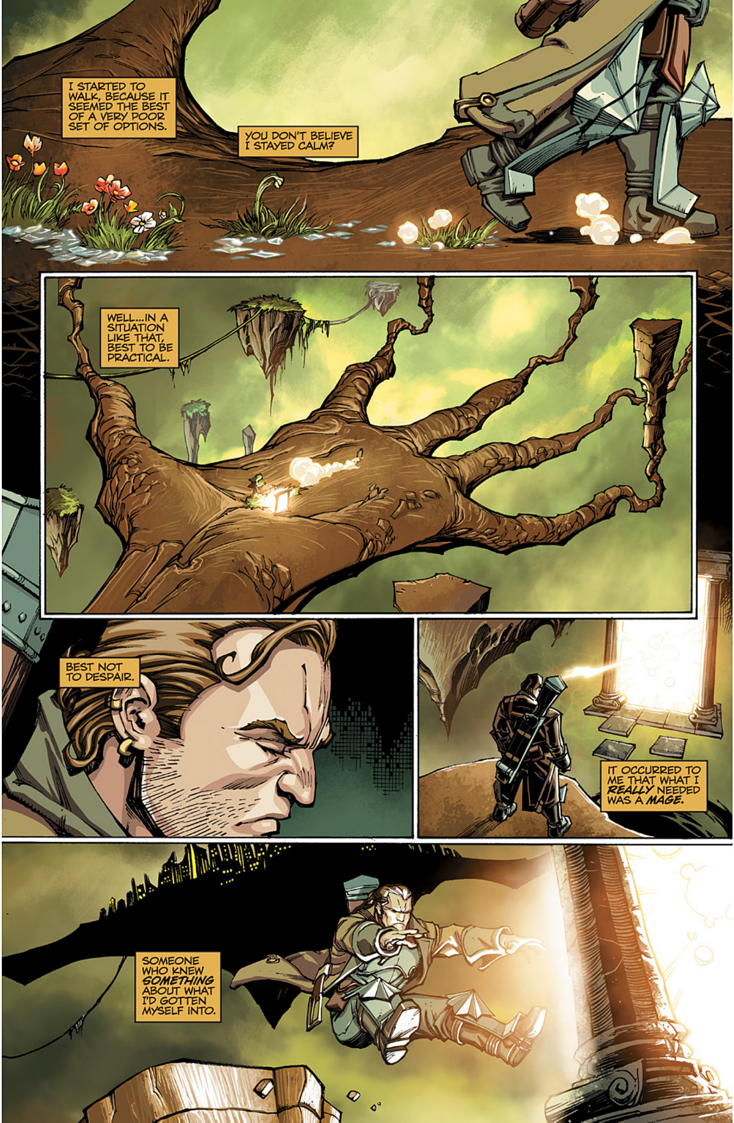

DON'T PLAY WITH THAT.
IT'S *MY* DESIGN!
SHE'S GOING TO MAKE US RICH.
NOT IF THE GUILD GETS TO US FIRST.
SO GIVE HER A NAME ALREADY.
NAMES HAVE POWER -- GIVE A THING A NAME AND IT'S YOURS FOREVER.
LIKE YOU?
ALWAYS.
THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

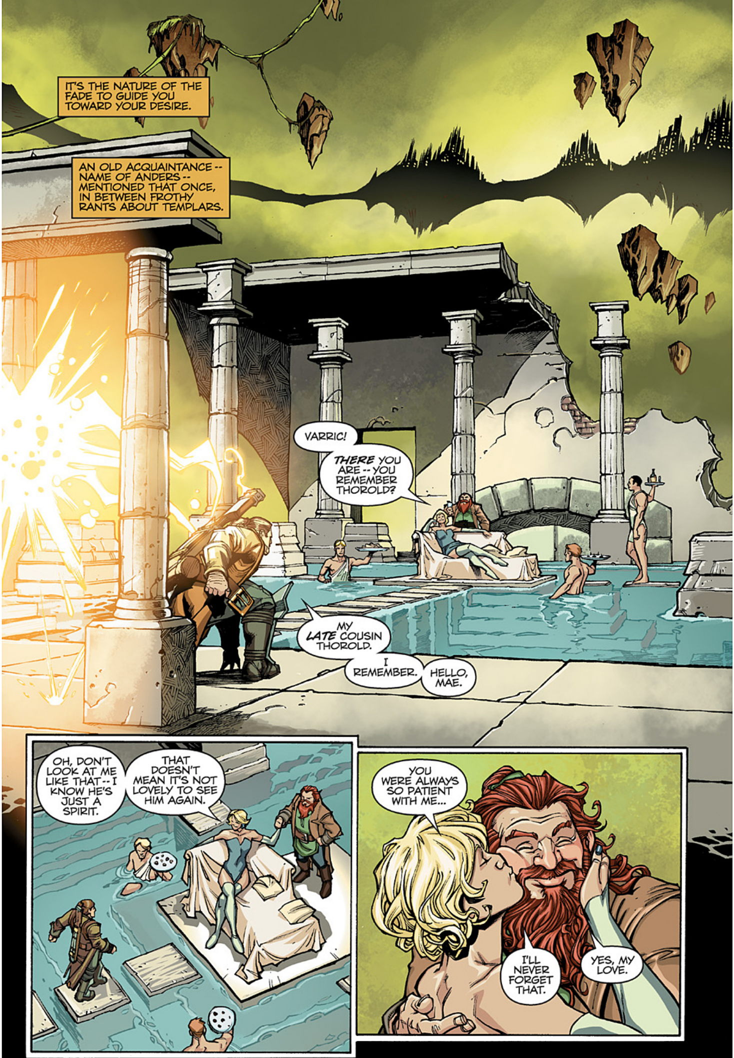

CHAPTER 2
THAT'S WHEN I WOKE UP.
ALL THE BLOOD MAGIC AND THE SWORD PLAY, THE KINGS AND PIRATES AND CHAMPIONS... ALL OF IT BECAME A DISTANT FLIGHT OF FANCY.
I MADE A NOTE TO WRITE IT DOWN. IT WOULD MAKE A DECENT STORY.
I WAS KEENLY AWARE THAT I'D NEVER *BEEN* AN ADVENTURER. MY LOT WAS TO BE A MIDDLEMAN BETWEEN MY FAMILY AND THE *DWARVEN MERCHANTS GUILD.*
MY JOB WAS TO FACILITATE *BUSINESS,* LIKE A BOWL OF PRUNES. AND THE ONLY SOLACE I HAD --
YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHAT I FOUND, VARRIC.
BIANCA?

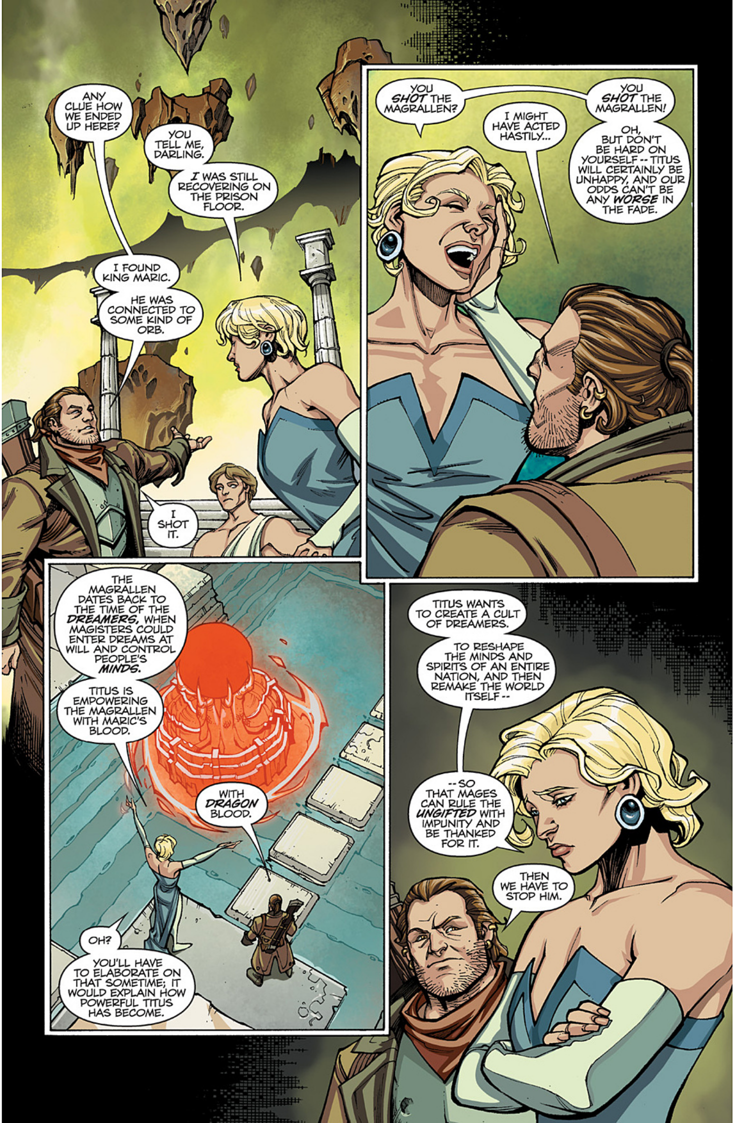

BECAUSE OF YOUR BROTHER?
HE DOESN'T ***DESERVE*** YOU, VARRIC.
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO FOR HIM, HE'LL ALWAYS TREAT YOU LIKE CRAP BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T BORN IN ORZAMMAR.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT BARTRAND.
THIS ISN'T HOW IT HAPPENED.
I KNOW YOU BETTER THAN THIS.
YOU LOOK OUT FOR EVERYONE -- ME, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR PARTNERS... BUT WHO LOOKS OUT FOR YOU?
STOP IT.
DON'T YOU LOVE ME?
DON'T YOU STILL WANT TO RUN AWAY WITH ME?
WE... TRIED THAT.
WE DIDN'T MAKE IT.

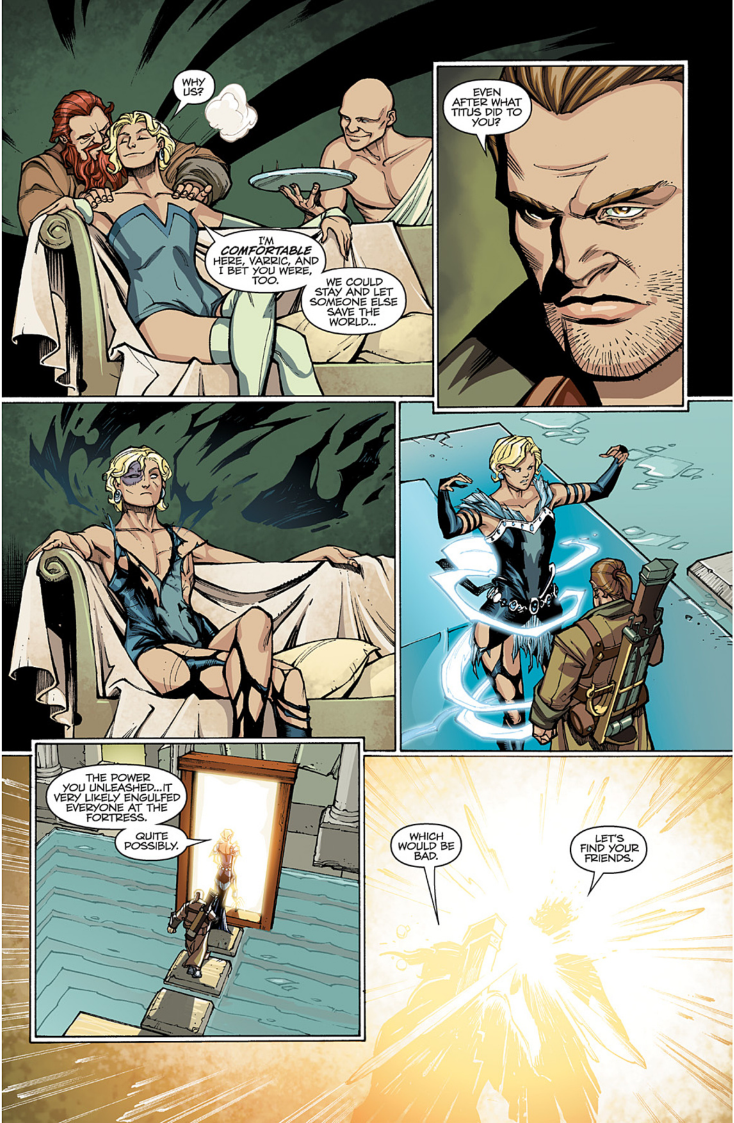

AS BEST I COULD TELL, I WAS IN THE *FADE* -- THE SOURCE OF *MAGIC* AND THE SOURCE OF *DREAMS.*
ONLY DWARVES DON'T DREAM, WHICH SUGGESTED TWO THINGS:
FIRST, I WAS PROBABLY UNCONSCIOUS ON TITUS'S LABORATORY FLOOR. MAYBE DEAD.
SECOND, WHEN IT CAME TO DREAMING, I APPARENTLY WASN'T MISSING MUCH.

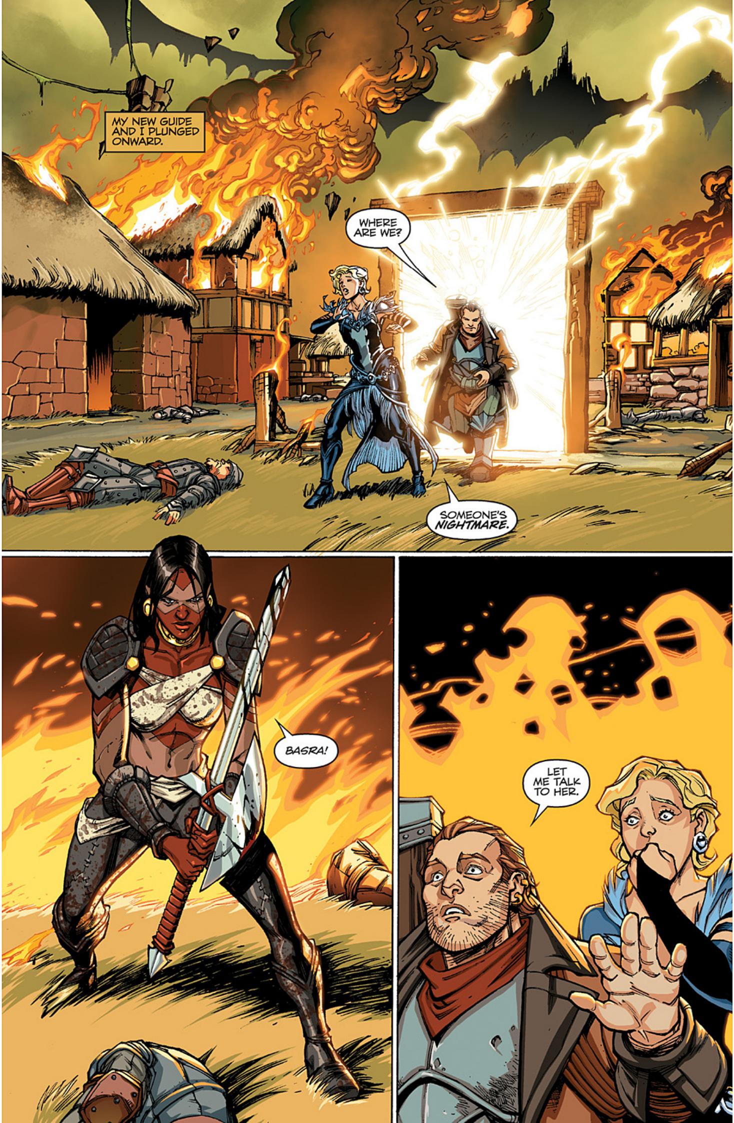

WE COULD MAKE IT *THIS* TIME, VARRIC.
IT WOULDN'T BE REAL.
LIKE A STORY?
YOU *LOVE* STORIES.
NOT AS MUCH AS I LOVED YOU.
THE ONLY SOLACE I HAD WAS A CERTAIN LADY FRIEND, AND THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT IN THE END.
THINGS RARELY DO.
WHEN I CAME TO MY SENSES, IT WAS...EASY ENOUGH TO TURN MY BACK ON WHAT HAD BEEN, AFTER ALL, AN ILLUSION.

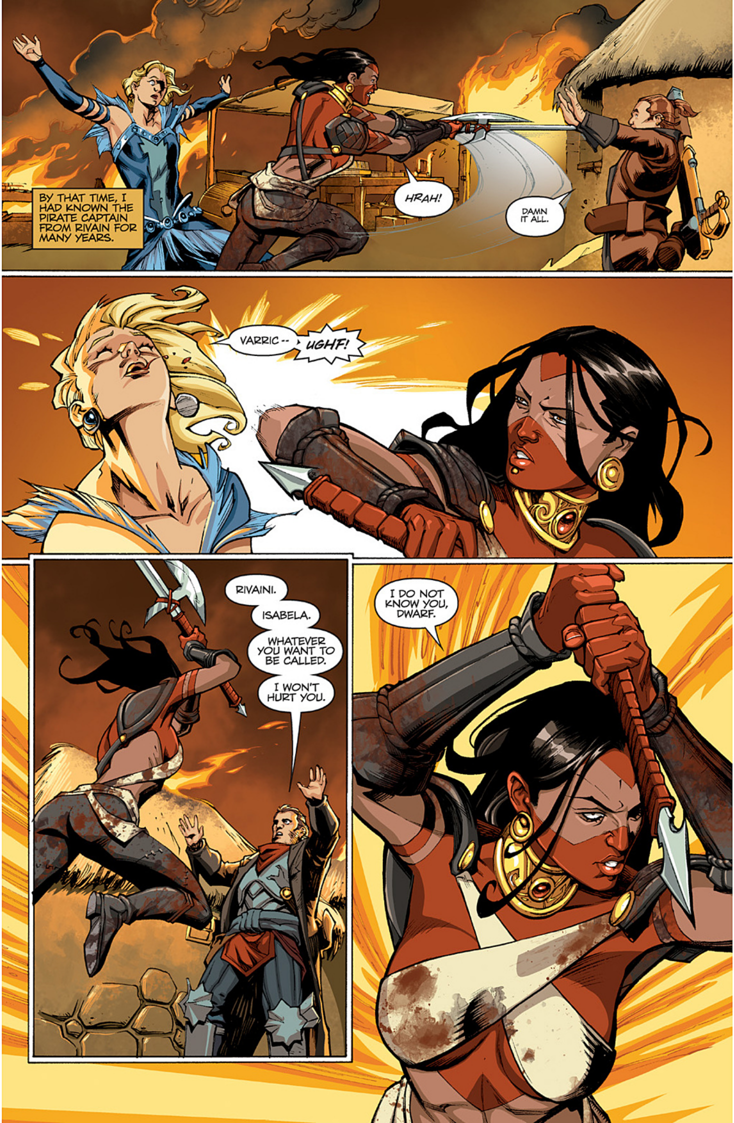

I STARTED TO WALK, BECAUSE IT SEEMED THE BEST OF A VERY POOR SET OF OPTIONS.
YOU DON'T BELIEVE I STAYED CALM?
WELL...IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT, BEST TO BE PRACTICAL.
BEST NOT TO DESPAIR.
IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT WHAT I *REALLY* NEEDED WAS A *MAGE.*
SOMEONE WHO KNEW *SOMETHING* ABOUT WHAT I'D GOTTEN MYSELF INTO.

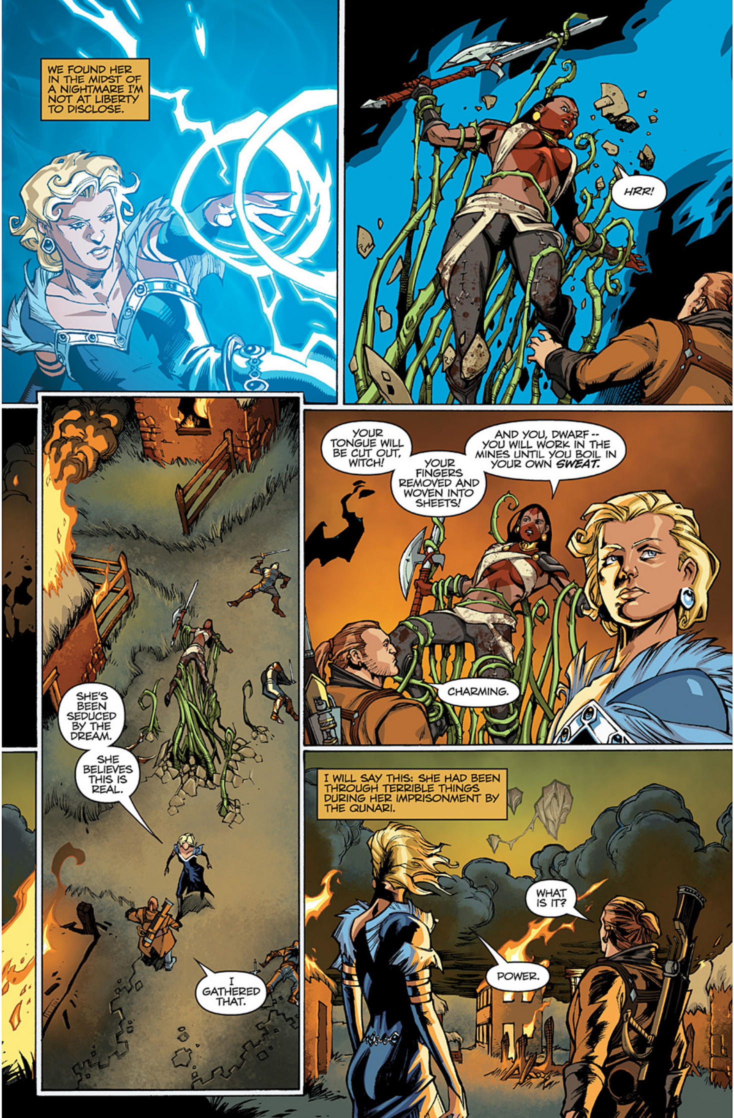

IT'S THE NATURE OF THE FADE TO GUIDE YOU TOWARD YOUR DESIRE.
AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE -- NAME OF ANDERS -- MENTIONED THAT ONCE, IN BETWEEN FROTHY RANTS ABOUT TEMPLARS.
VARRIC!
THERE YOU ARE -- YOU REMEMBER THOROLD?
MY *LATE* COUSIN THOROLD.
I REMEMBER.
HELLO, MAE.
OH, DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT -- I KNOW HE'S JUST A SPIRIT.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT LOVELY TO SEE HIM AGAIN.
YOU WERE ALWAYS SO PATIENT WITH ME...
I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT.
YES, MY LOVE.

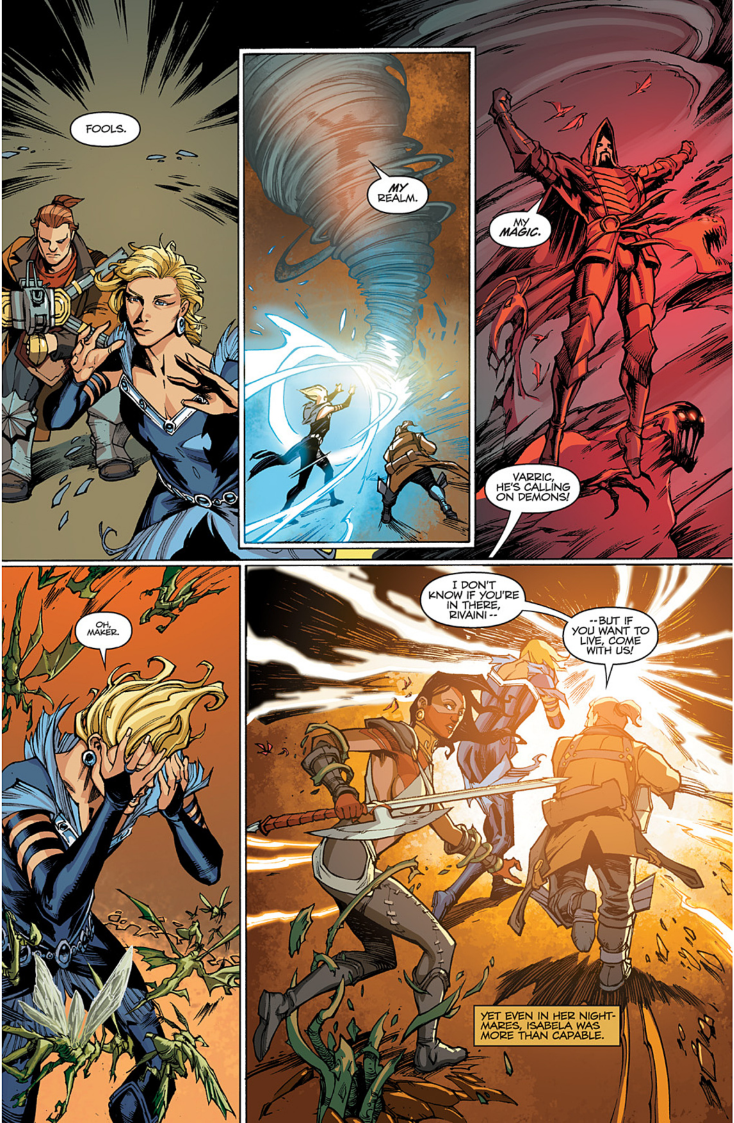

ANY CLUE HOW WE ENDED UP HERE?
YOU TELL ME, DARLING.
I WAS STILL RECOVERING ON THE PRISON FLOOR.
I FOUND KING MARIC.
HE WAS CONNECTED TO SOME KIND OF ORB.
I SHOT IT.
YOU *SHOT* THE MAGRALLEN?
YOU *SHOT* THE MAGRALLEN!
I MIGHT HAVE ACTED HASTILY...
OH, BUT DON'T BE HARD ON YOURSELF -- TITUS WILL CERTAINLY BE UNHAPPY, AND OUR ODDS CAN'T BE ANY *WORSE* IN THE FADE.
THE MAGRALLEN DATES BACK TO THE TIME OF THE *DREAMERS*, WHEN MAGISTERS COULD ENTER DREAMS AT WILL AND CONTROL PEOPLE'S *MINDS*.
TITUS IS EMPOWERING THE MAGRALLEN WITH MARIC'S BLOOD.
WITH *DRAGON* BLOOD.
OH?
YOU'LL HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT SOMETIME; IT WOULD EXPLAIN HOW POWERFUL TITUS HAS BECOME.
TITUS WANTS TO CREATE A CULT OF DREAMERS.
TO RESHAPE THE MINDS AND SPIRITS OF AN ENTIRE NATION, AND THEN REMAKE THE WORLD ITSELF --
-- SO THAT MAGES CAN RULE THE *UNGIFTED* WITH IMPUNITY AND BE THANKED FOR IT.
THEN WE HAVE TO STOP HIM.

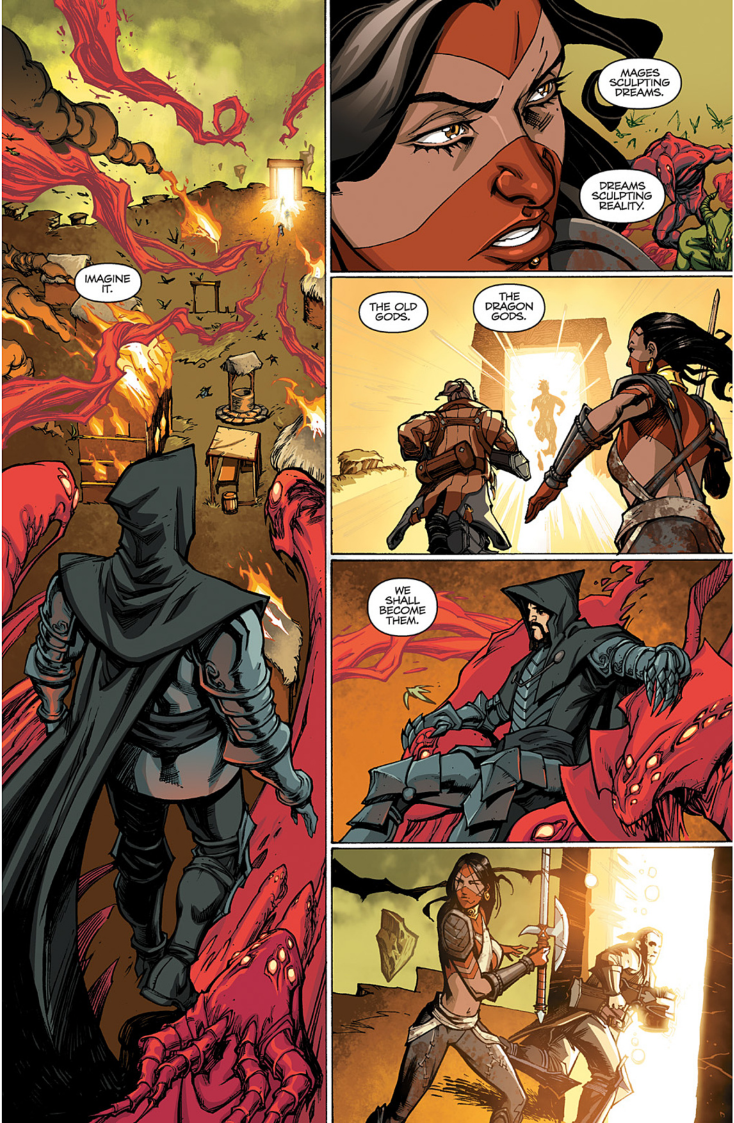

WHY US?
I'M *COMFORTABLE* HERE, VARRIC, AND I BET YOU WERE, TOO.
WE COULD STAY AND LET SOMEONE ELSE SAVE THE WORLD...
EVEN AFTER WHAT TITUS DID TO YOU?
THE POWER YOU UNLEASHED...IT VERY LIKELY ENGULFED EVERYONE AT THE FORTRESS.
QUITE POSSIBLY.
WHICH WOULD BE BAD.
LET'S FIND YOUR FRIENDS.

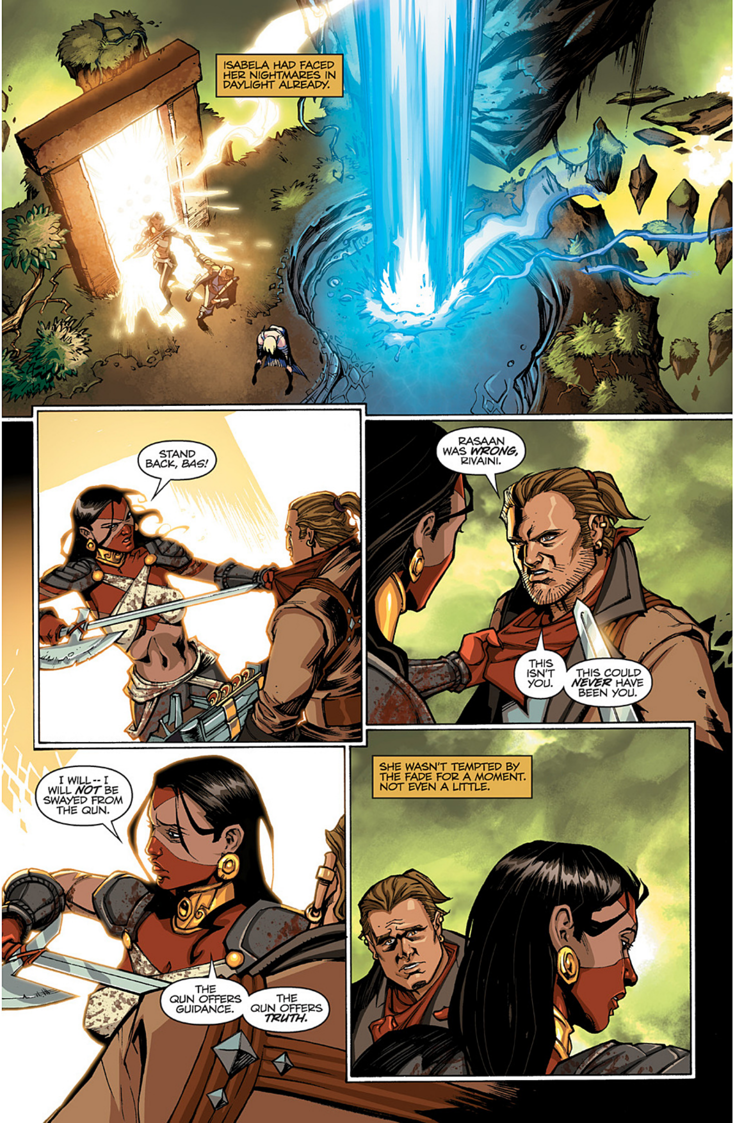

MY NEW GUIDE AND I PLUNGED ONWARD.
WHERE ARE WE?
SOMEONE'S *NIGHTMARE*.
BASRA!
LET ME TALK TO HER.

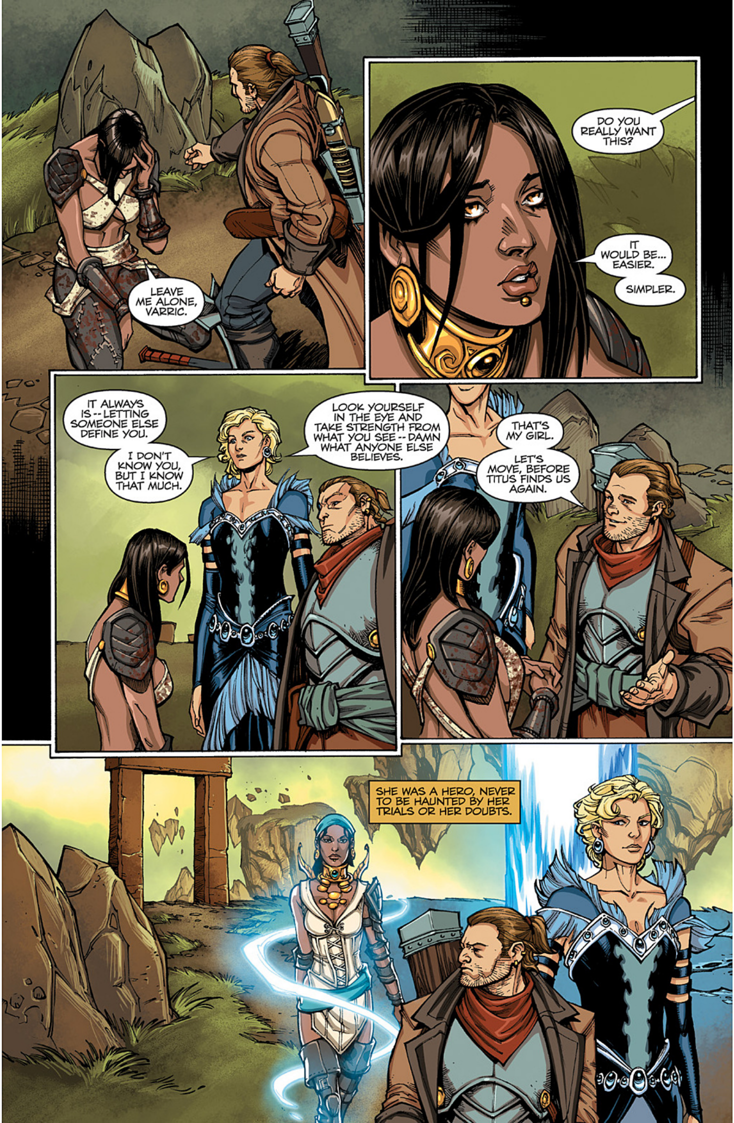

BY THAT TIME, I HAD KNOWN THE PIRATE CAPTAIN FROM RIVAIN FOR MANY YEARS.
HRAH!
DAMN IT ALL.
VARRIC --
UGHF!
RIVAINI.
ISABELA.
WHATEVER YOU WANT TO BE CALLED.
I WON'T HURT YOU.
I DO NOT KNOW YOU, DWARF.

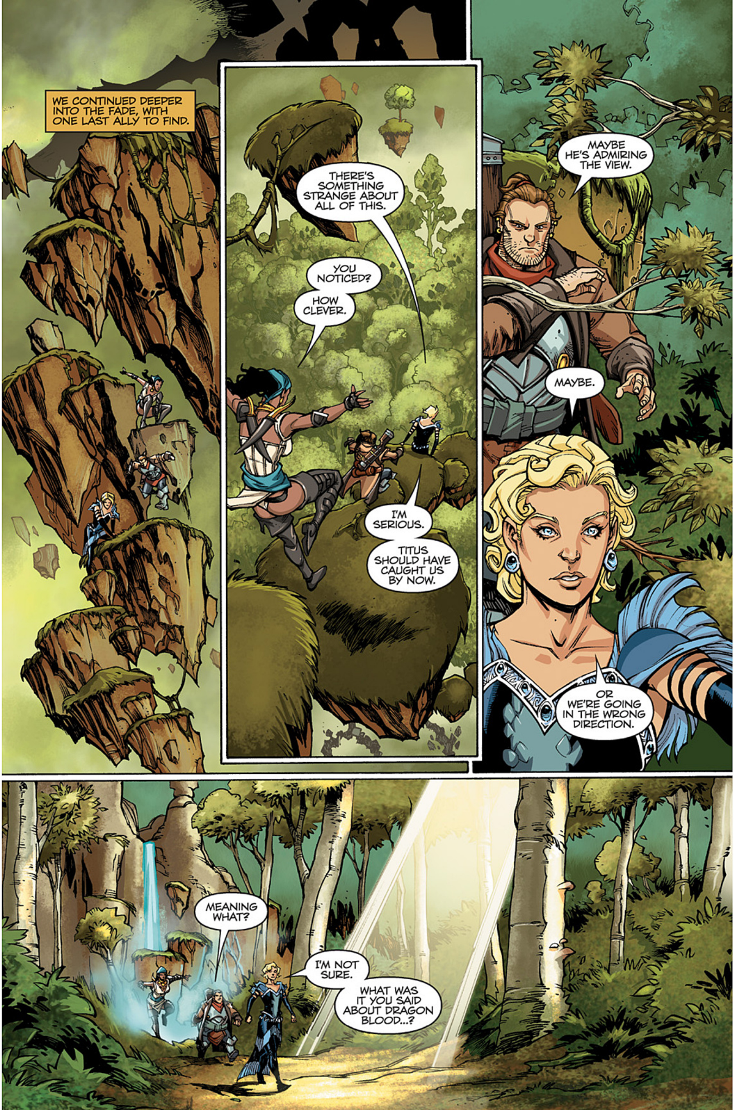

WE FOUND HER IN THE MIDST OF A NIGHTMARE I'M NOT AT LIBERTY TO DISCLOSE.
HRR!
SHE'S BEEN SEDUCED BY THE DREAM.
SHE BELIEVES THIS IS REAL.
I GATHERED THAT.
YOUR TONGUE WILL BE CUT OUT, WITCH!
YOUR FINGERS REMOVED AND WOVEN INTO SHEETS!
AND YOU, DWARF -- YOU WILL WORK IN THE MINES UNTIL YOU BOIL IN YOUR OWN *SWEAT.*
CHARMING.
I WILL SAY THIS: SHE HAD BEEN THROUGH TERRIBLE THINGS DURING HER IMPRISONMENT BY THE QUNARI.
WHAT IS IT?
POWER.

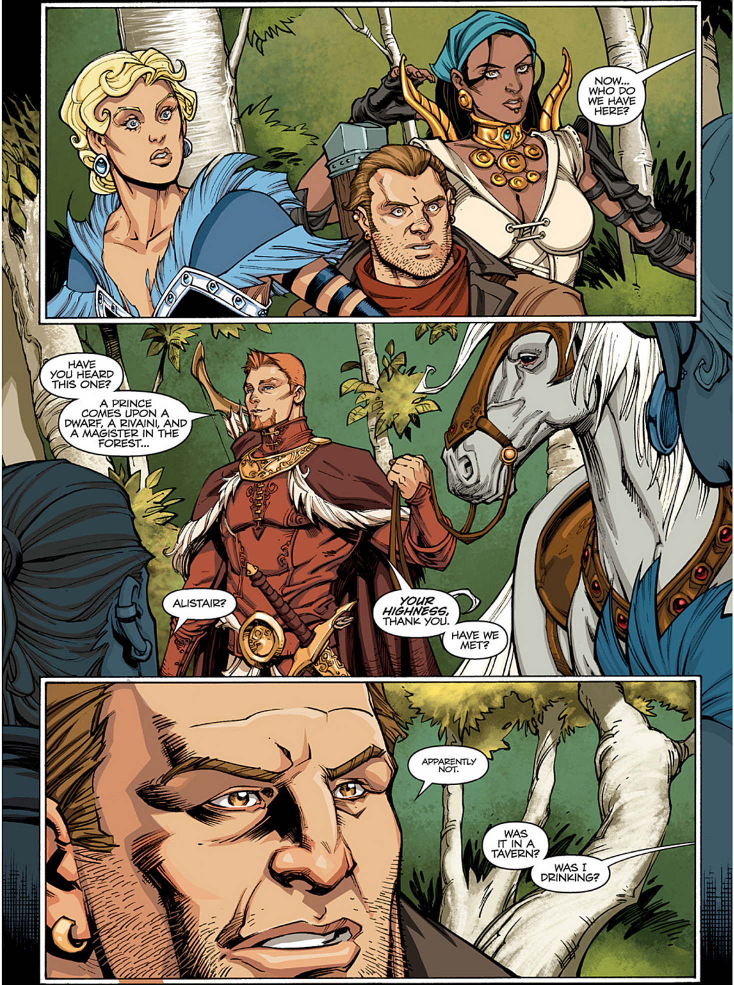

FOOLS.
MY REALM.
MY MAGIC.
VARRIC, HE'S CALLING ON DEMONS!
OH, MAKER.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE IN THERE, RIVAINI --
--BUT IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, COME WITH US!
YET EVEN IN HER NIGHTMARES, ISABELA WAS MORE THAN CAPABLE.

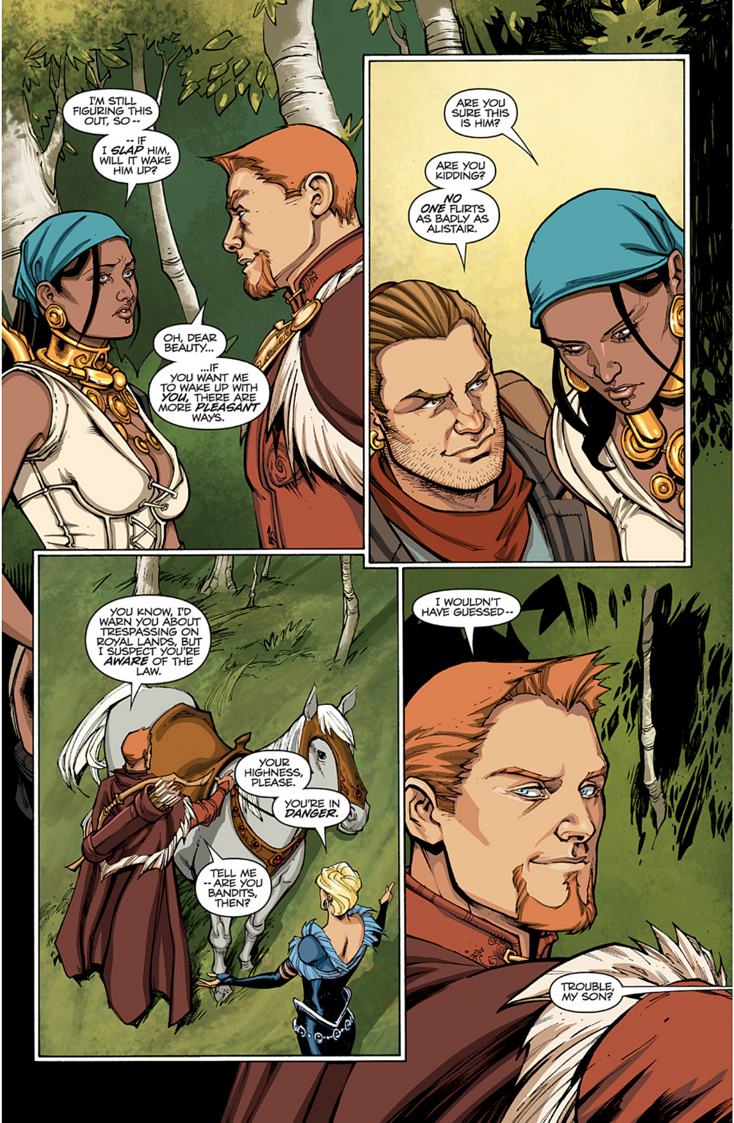

IMAGINE IT.
MAGES SCULPTING DREAMS.
DREAMS SCULPTING REALITY.
THE OLD GODS.
THE DRAGON GODS.
WE SHALL BECOME THEM.

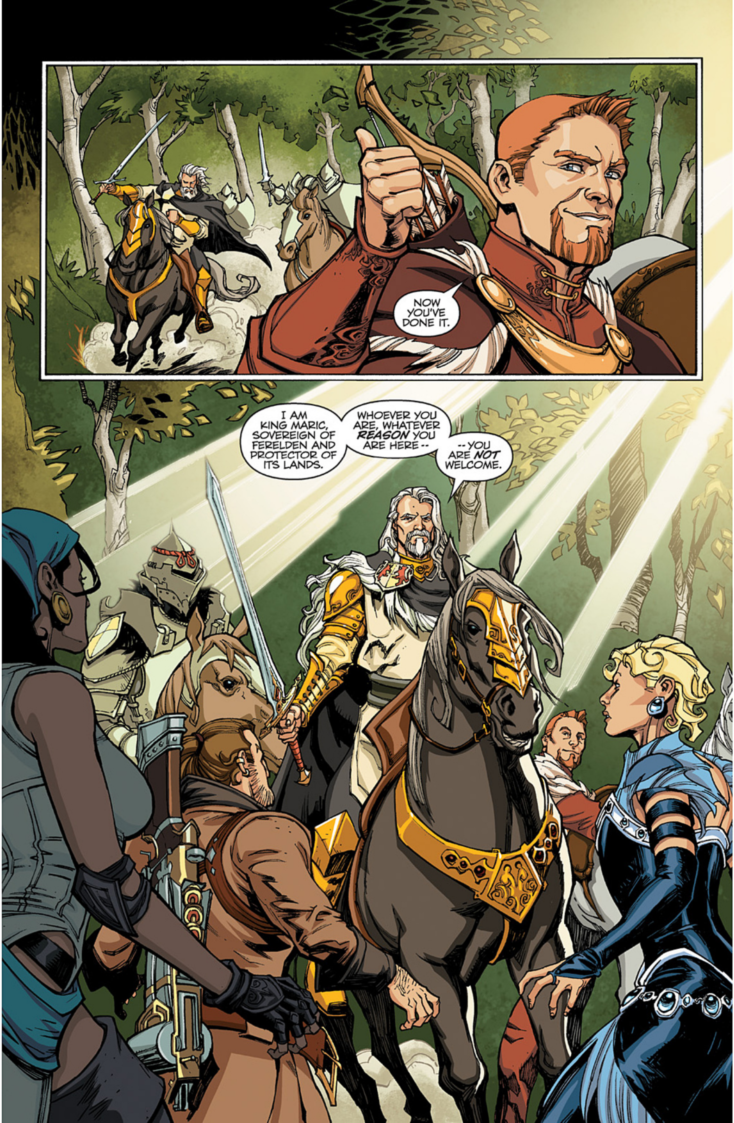

ISABELA HAD FACED HER NIGHTMARES IN DAYLIGHT ALREADY.
STAND BACK, BAS!
RASAAN WAS WRONG, RIVAINI.
THIS ISN'T YOU.
THIS COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN YOU.
I WILL -- I WILL NOT BE SWAYED FROM THE QUN.
THE QUN OFFERS GUIDANCE.
THE QUN OFFERS TRUTH.
SHE WASN'T TEMPTED BY THE FADE FOR A MOMENT. NOT EVEN A LITTLE.

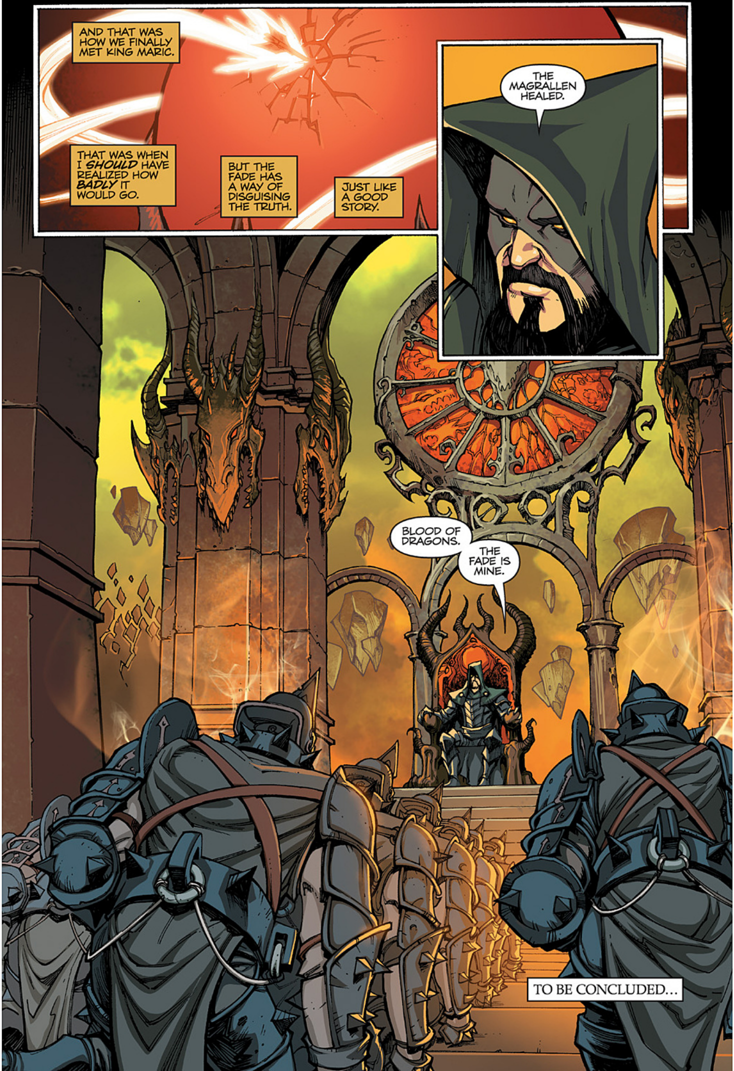

LEAVE ME ALONE, VARRIC.
DO YOU REALLY WANT THIS?
IT WOULD BE... EASIER.
SIMPLER.
IT ALWAYS IS -- LETTING SOMEONE ELSE DEFINE YOU.
I DON'T KNOW YOU, BUT I KNOW THAT MUCH.
LOOK YOURSELF IN THE EYE AND TAKE STRENGTH FROM WHAT YOU SEE -- DAMN WHAT ANYONE ELSE BELIEVES.
THAT'S MY GIRL.
LET'S MOVE, BEFORE TITUS FINDS US AGAIN.
SHE WAS A HERO, NEVER TO BE HAUNTED BY HER TRIALS OR HER DOUBTS.


WE CONTINUED DEEPER INTO THE FADE, WITH ONE LAST ALLY TO FIND.
THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT ALL OF THIS.
YOU NOTICED?
HOW CLEVER.
I'M SERIOUS.
TITUS SHOULD HAVE CAUGHT US BY NOW.
MAYBE HE'S ADMIRING THE VIEW.
MAYBE.
OR WE'RE GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.
MEANING WHAT?
I'M NOT SURE.
WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID ABOUT DRAGON BLOOD...?


NOW... WHO DO WE HAVE HERE?
HAVE YOU HEARD THIS ONE?
A PRINCE COMES UPON A DWARF, A RIVAINI, AND A MAGISTER IN THE FOREST...
ALISTAIR?
YOUR HIGHNESS, THANK YOU.
HAVE WE MET?
APPARENTLY NOT.
WAS IT IN A TAVERN?
WAS I DRINKING?


I'M STILL FIGURING THIS OUT, SO --
-- IF I *SLAP* HIM, WILL IT WAKE HIM UP?
OH, DEAR BEAUTY...
...IF YOU WANT ME TO WAKE UP WITH *YOU,* THERE ARE MORE *PLEASANT* WAYS.
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS HIM?
ARE YOU KIDDING?
NO ONE FLIRTS AS BADLY AS ALISTAIR.
YOU KNOW, I'D WARN YOU ABOUT TRESPASSING ON ROYAL LANDS, BUT I SUSPECT YOU'RE *AWARE* OF THE LAW.
YOUR HIGHNESS, PLEASE.
YOU'RE IN *DANGER.*
TELL ME -- ARE YOU BANDITS, THEN?
I WOULDN'T HAVE GUESSED --
TROUBLE, MY SON?


NOW YOU'VE DONE IT.
I AM KING MARIC, SOVEREIGN OF FERELDEN AND PROTECTOR OF ITS LANDS.
WHOEVER YOU ARE, WHATEVER *REASON* YOU ARE HERE --
-- YOU ARE *NOT* WELCOME.


AND THAT WAS HOW WE FINALLY MET KING MARIC.
THAT WAS WHEN I *SHOULD* HAVE REALIZED HOW *BADLY* IT WOULD GO.
BUT THE FADE HAS A WAY OF DISGUISING THE TRUTH.
JUST LIKE A GOOD STORY.
THE MAGRALLEN HEALED.
BLOOD OF DRAGONS.
THE FADE IS MINE.
TO BE CONCLUDED…